

10 July 1980

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Location and Movement of the Hostages

Following the rescue attempt, the militants made a decision to decrease their vulnerability to another attack by announcing that they had removed the hostages from the US Embassy in Tehran and dispersed them to various Iranian cities. Since that time they have successfully pursued a campaign to confuse the US about the location of the hostages by announcing that hostages were being moved continually from city to city and by citing new locations. There are no confirmed reports on the exact whereabouts of the hostages. [redacted]

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[redacted] There are good arguments for the position that the hostages were never moved from the Embassy and that the militants have been pursuing a disinformation campaign.

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--The US Embassy compound in Tehran offers a number of logistical advantages. Food, clothing, and other supplies are readily available. The large, walled compound area with main Revolutionary Guard units posted nearby offers security advantages.

--The security situation in other cities is more uncertain, and the militants no doubt realize that other groups might try to seize the hostages.

--The leaders of the militants would be reluctant to surrender their tight control over the hostages by dispersing their followers-- who could then make independent decisions--or by inviting greater participation from other groups such as local revolutionary committees and guards. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Southwest Asia Analytic Center, Near East South Asia Division, Office of Political Analysis. Questions and comments may be addressed to Deputy Chief, Southwest Asia Analytic Center on [redacted]

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The weight of the evidence, however, seems to suggest that at least a few of the hostages are being held outside the embassy.

--Even before the rescue mission, [redacted] a few of the "most guilty" were probably moved outside the compound for questioning and safekeeping for periods of time. The rescue mission probably frightened the militants into the recognition that the embassy location was vulnerable and that if they wanted to hold on to the hostages-- their only source of power-- at least some must be moved so that the US could never seize all of them in one raid. Moving a handful of the hostages to two or three cities would not significantly strain the militants' logistical capabilities and would be a prudent insurance risk. [redacted]

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--The militants have always been factionalized and this was an opportunity for each faction to gain control over a few of the hostages. Since the rescue mission only one joint numbered statement by the militants has been released. Before the mission over 135 numbered statements were issued. The paucity of statements could be seen as the result of the inability of the militants to hammer out a joint statement because they are no longer together. [redacted]

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--Another reason to believe some of the hostages have been moved is the lack of observed activity at the embassy. The number of guards has diminished and security seems to have slackened. [redacted]

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It is inevitable that the militants will continue to attempt to confuse the US on the location of the hostages. The only possibility of the militants' publically bringing the hostages together would be if the Majles decided they should be tried as a whole group or that they should attend or testify at a trial of the US. It is more likely, however, that the hostages would be tried in smaller groups according to degree of guilt. If this happens, the militants can continue to hide the hostages under consideration. [redacted]

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